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Godard on Godard[1] contains 116 pieces written or spoken by Godard between June 1950 and August 1967. Items 1–85 comprise Godard's output as a film critic through July 1959. In August–September 1959, Godard dropped regular criticism and shot *Breathless*. He wrote about films after this, but much less frequently. The book collects 31 of these occasional pieces under the heading "Marginal Notes While Filming"—memorials, statements on his own films, defenses of neglected films, a speech, a protest letter, contributions to a dictionary of American film-makers, and four interviews. Among the latter are two long *Cahiers* interviews edited and revised by Godard himself, dated December 1962 (*Breathless* to *Vivre Sa Vie*) and October 1965 (*Les Carabiniers* to *Pierrot le Fou*).

The following notes concern items 1-85, Godard's film criticism written before August 1959. The distribution of these pieces in time is interesting. Godard wrote 11 pieces between June 1950 and October 1952, then published nothing for almost four years. In August 1956 he returned to criticism and turned out 74 pieces in the three years before he made *Breathless*. His most productive period was the last six months, February–July 1959, in which he wrote 31 pieces.

"Defense and Illustration of Classical Construction" (#9) was written in 1952, when Godard was 21. It is his longest theoretical piece and arguably his most important. It is a direct attack upon the Bazinian position, itself in process of formation at this time but settled in its main outlines. The specific object of Godard's critique is Bazin's account of classical construction ("découpage") in cinema. According to Bazin, a standard mode of shot breakdown dominated world cinema during the 1930–1939 period. In the forties, the composition-in-depth technique of Welles and Wyler and Italian neo-realism constituted a "revolution in expression." Their avoidance of editing effects and of frame manipulations was "a positive technique that produces better results than a classical breakdown of shots could ever have done." These styles showed "the event" in its physical unity, hence tended strongly toward the long take (temporal verisimilitude) and the long shot (spatial verisimilitude) rather than the arranged series of closer and shorter shots dictated by classical construction.

Godard rejects this analysis on all counts—historical, theoretical, and aesthetic. The historical point should be mentioned here, as it will help make Godard's argument clearer. Godard denies Bazin's suggestion that classical construction ended or suffered an aesthetic eclipse after 1939. Godard's favorite directors of this period—Preminger, Mankiewicz, Robson, and Hitchcock—all use classical construction in some form. A close reading of his critique will be useful. Godard begins by recalling Sartre's denunciation of Mauriac for playing God with his characters; that is, for failing to endow them with that freedom in which Sartre himself believes. Godard comments:

> But what vanity, too, to insist at all costs on crediting language with a certain metaphysical quality, when it could only rise to the level of the sublime in very special circumstances. Consider, rather, with Diderot, that morality and perspective are the two qualities essential to the artist . . . [2]

Godard is drawing a parallel between Sartre's criticism and Bazin's; both impose a metaphysical preconception upon art, praising works which fit the preconception, criticizing works which do not. This is vain because art has rarely to do with metaphysics. The workaday tools of the artist are morality and perspective; these should be the concern of the critic as well. Godard restates the argument pungently in the concluding paragraph of the article.

> I think I have said enough about the error of critics in falling under the influence of contemporary philosophy, in elevating certain figures of style into a

vision of the world, in investing some technical process or other with astrological pretensions it cannot possibly have. . . . [3]

The middle portions of the article develop the argument in several directions. Generally they attempt to clarify Godard's opting for morality and perspective as the proper concerns of film and his conception of classical construction as the formal expression of these concerns. First, he invokes the French eighteenth century in arguing that the polished speeches and precise *mise-en-scène* of the American cinema are not inconsistent with serious moral themes. His target here seems to be Bazin's discovery of a new seriousness of theme and subject in Welles and neorealism, "a renewal of subject-matter" in the postwar cinema, and Bazin's connecting this phenomenon integrally with realism and composition-in-depth, "a film like *Paisa* proves that the cinema was twenty years behind the contemporary novel."[4]

> Have we forgotten that this facility is nothing new, that the ease of the transatlantic film-makers once found its echo in our own admirable eighteenth century?
>
> Everyone wrote well in those days (consider the circumstances under which *La Religieuse* was written), yet serious events were taking place.
>
> My purpose is not paradox. I would like to note certain points common to the art of the eighteenth century and the *mise en scène* of recent years. Firstly, in the attitude of the artist to nature: he acknowledges nature as art's principal model. And then in the fact that it was not the cinema which inherited a narrative technique from the novel, but the novel which inherited an art of dialogue—lost, should one add, since Corneille?[5]

Godard's praise of theater and his comparison of cinema to theater throughout the article are partly a response to Bazin's equation of cinema with the novel at several places. The last sentence of Bazin's "The Evolution of Film Language" equates different stages of film history with different arts and makes novelistic cinema the object of a teleology. "The film-maker is no longer simply the competitor of the painter or the playwright; he is at last the equal of the novelist."[6]

The paragraphs that follow interweave several themes rather subtly or disconnectedly, depending upon how they are read. Godard leaps from Corneille to a fear that harmony, however beautiful, will not suffice this most virtuous of the arts. Cinema also needs truth—

> to correct—in Delacroix's fine phrase—the reality of that perspective in which the eye takes too much pleasure not to want to falsify it. By this I mean it will not be content with imitating a reality 'seized at random' (Jean Renoir). In fact, if the cinema were no more than the art of narration which some would make its proud boast, then instead of being bored, one would take pleasure in those interminable efforts which are concerned above all with exposing in meticulous detail the secret motivations of a murderer or a coquette. But there is a look, posed so afresh on things at each instant that it pierces rather than solicits them, that it seizes in them what abstraction lies in wait for.[7]

He takes an example from Renoir, who he says owes less to Impressionism than to Henri David.

> Renoir's *mise-en-scène* has the same quality of revealing detail without detaching it from its context. If Renoir uses a deep-focus style in *Madame Bovary,* it is to imitate the subtle way in which nature conceals the relationship between its effects; if he prepares events, it is not in order to make them connect better, for he is more concerned with the impact of emotions than with the contagion they create.[8]

The nature of dialectic in cinema is that one must live rather than last. It is pointless to kill one's feelings in order to live longer. American comedy (sound) is vastly important because it brings back "swiftness of action" and allows the moment to be savored to the full. Our mode of seeing films is important here also—when we concentrate on *plot* rather than on the manner of its exposition, we reduce complex and subtle gestures to dull signals.

What is Godard saying here? It seems to be that cinema, like theater, is a realm of *heightened* emotions. Its effectiveness depends upon rhythm, pacing, and intensity. This model opposes Bazin's model of cinema as novelistic, as the realist description of relationships existent elsewhere. No, the director *constructs* his film, dialogue, and *mise-en-scène,* at every point. Even Renoir, the trump card of Bazinism, is more like David than an Impressionist: a careful *arranger* who "prepares events," who may reproduce "the look" of things, but in doing so subjects them to

an abstraction or schema that he brings to them. He prepares events not novelistically so that they connect well, but *theatrically,* so as to obtain the desired effect or impact. Godard suggests that the relationship Renoir/nature is less important than the relationship Renoir/audience. The preparations, the emotional effects, the "living not lasting" which Godard values so highly— all depend upon the precise pacing of the de- coupage, which is the necessary form of cinema as theater. Emotions and gestures are defined and sharpened, presented and analyzed, by de- coupage. This heightening, which is necessarily quick-perishing, is the true nature of cinema. Novelistic cinema, with its long shots and long takes, *deadens* emotions and gestures in its mis- guided attempt to narrate and describe them in exhaustive detail and thereby to make them last longer than their nature permits.

Several additional passages give the flavor of Godard's admiration for decoupage and fill out a rudimentary inventory of its rhetorical figures, effects, and possibilities.

> I would like to contend with those who seek to lay down absolute rules. . . . All I mean to claim is that the *mise en scène* of *To Have and Have Not* is better suited than that of *The Best Years of Our Lives* to convey aberrations of heart and mind, that this is its purpose, whereas the object of the latter is rather the external relationships between people.[9]
> I would go so far as to defy anyone to capture in a medium long shot the extreme disquiet, the inner agitation, in a word, the confusion which the waist shot (*plan américain*) through its very inexpressive- ness, conveys so powerfully . . .[10]
> Abandoning even the habit of placing one of the interlocutors in the foreground, the classical con- struction sticks even closer to psychological reality, by which I mean that of the emotions; there are, in effect, no spiritual storms, no troubles of the heart which remain unmarked by physical causes, a rush of blood to the brain, a nervous weakness, whose in- tensity would not be lessened by frequent comings and goings. If this manner is the most classical, it is also because rarely has such contempt been shown for photographing a world seized by accident, and because here language is only the reflection of pas- sions, which they may therefore dominate.[11]
> From the art of *Only Angels Have Wings* to that of *His Girl Friday, The Big Sleep* and indeed, of *To Have and Have Not,* what does one see? An in-

creasingly precise taste for analysis, a love for this artificial grandeur connected to movements of the eyes, to a way of walking, in short, a greater aware- ness than anyone else of what the cinema can glory in, and a refusal to profit from this (like Bresson and Welles) to create anti-cinema, but instead, through a more rigorous knowledge of its limits, fixing its basic laws.[12]

Godard moves from these points to a related one made frequently in his later essays—classi- cal construction is not a system mechanically imposed upon a scene nor external to its content; camera and editing treatment derive in each case from the scene itself. Thus Bazin's argument that classical construction reached its peak in the thirties is doubly wrong, historically and theoretically. It ignores Preminger and many other directors of the present who continue to use it integrally to their art. Even worse, it suggests that classical construction was more or less the same for everyone. In Bazin's version, it merely "presents the event," neutrally and ob- jectively. "The change in camera angles does not add anything, it simply presents reality in the most effective manner." Bazin reduces classical construction to a single format or style. Godard, on the contrary, sees in it a large area of choice and differentiation, within which many and va- ried styles may define themselves.

> Where Preminger uses a crane, Hawks is apt to use an axial cut: the means of expression change only because the subjects change, and the sign draws its signification not from itself but from what it repre- sents, from the scene enacted. Nothing could be more wrong than to talk of classical construction as a language which had reached its peak of perfection before the Second World War with Lubitsch in America and Marcel Carné in France, and which would therefore be tantamount to an autonomous thought-process, applicable with equal success to any subject whatsoever. What I admire in Gance, Murnau, Dreyer or Eisenstein, is the gift these artists possess for seizing in reality what the cinema is best suited to glorify. Classical construction has long existed, and it would be insulting to Lubitsch to sug- gest that he was anxious to break with the theories of his elders. . . .[13]

One of the article's most interesting arguments is developed only in the final paragraph. Long- shot, long-take cinema—

strip(s) classical psychology of that part of it which the cinema could make use of, render explicit, by not reducing man to 'the succession of appearances by which he is manifest' (Jean-Paul Sartre), and, paradoxically, by restoring to the monism of the phenomenon only the plurality of interpretation which it lacks.[14]

Godard's paradox is that long-take shooting does *not* after all preserve the ambiguity of a character or actress, as Bazin contended. It merely reduces her to a surface, it identifies her with her appearance. It thereby *flattens* that realm in which ambiguity might reside, the interior, or more precisely, that space, gap, or discrepancy *between* the interior and the appearance, the essence and the phenomenon. Godard has his intellectual coordinates right, he *is* reacting against phenomenology in the name of that classical (dualistic) psychology which phenomenology critiqued. He cleverly suggests, however, that classical psychology provides the more interesting model for cinema:

> The eye, since it can say everything, then deny everything because it is merely casual, is the key piece in the film actor's game. One looks what one feels, and what one does not wish to reveal as one's secret. Consider the method of Otto Preminger, the cunning and precise paraphrase this Viennese makes of reality, and you will soon notice that the use of shot and reaction shot, the preference for medium rather than long shots, reveals a desire to reduce the drama to the immobility of the face, for the face is not only part of the body, it is the prolongation of an idea which one must capture and reveal.[15]

and, the concluding lines of the essay:

> In the cinema, beauty is merely the avowal of personality, it offers us indications about an actress which are not in her performance. The cinema does not query the beauty of a woman, it only doubts her heart, records perfidy (it is an art, La Bruyère says, of the entire person to place a word or action so that it puts one off the scent), sees only her movements. Do not smile at such passion fired by logic; one can clearly see that what ensures its worth is that at each instant it is a question of loving or dying.[16]

Something should be said about the numerous references to the French eighteenth century in "Defense" and other early Godard essays. These constitute an extended metaphor, which the texts concerned have the integrity to take literally. As with any metaphor, the question is What is it being used to think?—for "the eighteenth century" means what any writer wants it to mean. A reading of these texts must answer this question. We will merely venture a few notes. There is first the historical point that eighteenth century aesthetics waged a gradually victorious battle against the rationalist aesthetics of the seventeenth century. The latter sought and found a priori rules in the realm of art as in other realms of knowledge. Critically, this was the age of neoclassicism, wherein tragedy was required to meet certain prescriptions such as the unities of space and time, etc. Eighteenth-century aestheticians brought empirical modes of thought to their discipline and sought to free art and criticism from a priori rules. Godard's running battle against Bazin also centers upon the charge of applying a priori standards to art, thereby stifling it and distorting it; Godard too most often proceeds by empirical analysis of works of art he experiences as effective. Godard's invocation of Diderot is likewise well-considered. His "the natural order corresponds to that of the heart and mind" is not far from Diderot's later aesthetic theories, wherein the beautiful is dependent upon certain *rapports* which inhere in the object and which must also be perceived as such by the contemplating mind. Diderot's theory is that the artist cannot hope to capture the existential reality of the external world. What he can do is convey to the spectator his own particular and unique way of seeing things. He is not a passive imitator of reality, he must be able to construct a whole universe which has its own laws of harmony paralleling those of external reality.

What the eighteenth century did *not* change in relation to its predesessors was the focus upon rules of discourse in all discussions of art and communication. The appropriate discipline for such studies was rhetoric, its concerns were the organization and the effects of various kinds of discourse. This is where Godard places his emphasis also; we have noted the tendency of "Defense" toward an inventory of rhetorical figures and effects in classical cinema. Of course, God-

ard's emphasis on discourse is very different from that of the eighteenth century. The interventions of romanticism, realism, phenomenology, and many other movements would define his position very differently even if it were formally identical to some eighteenth-century theory. *In context,* Godard's emphasis on discourse is a break with Bazinism, which resolutely denies or minimizes the organizational and audience-effect operations of discourse. It has far more in common with the semiological positions of Metz and others. If a teleology were being constructed (from the present backwards, of course), one would say that Godard "anticipated" Metz in some ways.*

There is also the consideration that the mythic empiricism, quasiatheism, and antisuperstition of the French eighteenth century provide a good foil to Bazin's religious, reverential approach to cinema. "Defense" sees in its favored directors "a reaction, maybe unconscious, against the religious tendency of the modern cinema." The chosen language of Godard's texts is perhaps a reaction against a comparable tendency of contemporary film criticism. An ideological analysis might suggest that Godard's texts, unwilling to speak the language of Marxism, yet unwilling to speak the language of revived religion or other current ideology, chose to retreat into a language of the past, in this case that of the safely removed progressivism of the Enlightenment.

Godard continued the attack on Bazin in several pieces subsequent to "Defense," but none of these is as comprehensive or systematic as the earlier text. There is a slight but distinct change of emphasis. Many of the later pieces elaborate a point developed in "Defense"—the responsiveness of form to content in classical cinema, particularly in the great directors like Hitchcock. "The means of expression change only because the subjects change." Godard uses this point, supported by many examples, to critique the Bazinian position, though he is also interested

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*Barthes defines discourse in relation to speech. *"Speech [parole]:* In contrast to the language, which is both institution and system, *speech* is essentially an individual act of selection and actualization; it is made in the first place of the 'combination thanks to which the speaking subject can use the code of the language with a view to expressing his personal thought' (this extended speech could be called *discourse*) . . . " *(Elements of Semiology* (1964; 1967; New York, Hill and Wang), pp. 14–15.)

Metz defines discourse in "Notes Toward a Phenomenology of the Narrative": "A closed sequence, a temporal sequence: Every narrative is, therefore, a discourse (the converse is not true; many discourses are not narratives—the lyric poem, the educational film, etc.).

"What distinguishes a discourse from the rest of the world, and by the same token contrasts it with the 'real' world, is the fact that a discourse must necessarily be made by someone (for discourse is not language), whereas one of the characteristics of the world is that it is uttered by no one.

"In Jakobsonian terms, one would say that a discourse, being a statement or sequence of statements, refers necessarily to a subject of the statement. But one should not hastily assume an author, for the notion of authorship is simply one of the forms, culturally bound and conditioned, of a far more universal process, which, for that reason, should be called the 'narrative process.'

"Narratives without authors, but not without narrators. The impression that *someone is speaking* is bound not to the empirical presence of a definite, known, or knowable speaker but to the listener's spontaneous perception of the linguistic nature of the object to which he is listening; because it is speech, someone must be speaking.

"Albert Laffay, in *Logique du cinéma,* has shown this to be true of film narrative. The spectator perceives images which have obviously been selected (they could have been other images) and arranged (their order could have been different). In a sense, he is leafing through an album of predetermined pictures, and it is not he who is turning the pages but some 'grand imagemaker' *(grand imagier)* who . . . is first and foremost the film itself as a linguistic object (since the spectator always knows that what he is seeing is a film), or more precisely a sort of 'potential linguistic focus' *(foyer linguistique virtue)* situated somewhere behind the film, and representing the basis that makes the film possible. That is the filmic form of the narrative instance, which is necessarily present, and is necessarily perceived, in any narrative." *(Film Language: A Semiotics of the Cinema,* translated by Michael Taylor (1974: New York, Oxford), p. 20–21.)

in exploring this cinema for its own sake.

"What Is Cinema?" (#10) and "Montage My Fine Care" (#14) are generalized critiques in this mode, tending to repeat "Defense." From the former:

> [Contemporary art] has rejected what for centuries was the pride of the great masters, and indeed of humbler craftsmen: the portrait of the individual . . .
>
> Metaphysical pretensions are the rage in the salons. This is the fashion . . . This absurd opposition between the artist and nature is the more absurd, the more vain, in that nothing, neither Manet nor Schumann nor Dostoievsky, prefigured it. . . .
>
> Yet the fact that a landscape may be a state of mind does not necessarily mean that poetry is only captured by chance, as our too clever documentarists would have us believe, but that the natural order corresponds to that of the heart and mind. Flaherty's genius, after all, is not so far removed from that of Hitchcock—Nanook hunting his prey is like a killer stalking his victims—and lies in identifying time with the desire which consumes it, guilt with suffering, fear and remorse with pleasure, and in making of space the tangible terrain of one's uneasiness. Art attracts us only by what it reveals of our most secret self. This is the sort of depth I mean. Obviously it assumes an idea of man which is hardly revolutionary, and which the great film-makers from Griffith to Renoir were too conservative to dare to deny. So, to the question 'What is Cinema?', I would reply: the expression of lofty sentiments.[17]

This essay affirms Godard's human-centered cinema—"the portrait of the individual," "art attracts by what it reveals of our most secret self." This opposes Bazin's nature-centered cinema. The second paragraph implies a man/nature opposition at the center of Bazin; without it, the urged self-effacement of the director before reality makes no sense.

"Montage My Fine Care" is clearer and crisper than "Classical Construction," but whether it adds much to the earlier piece is doubtful. It argues in favor of montage, and hence at least implicitly against Bazin; it also says that editing and *mise-en-scène* are correlative and interdependent. "Talking of *mise-en-scène* automatically implies montage. When montage effects surpass those of *mise-en-scène* in efficacity, the beauty of the latter is doubled."[18] As in the earlier piece, Godard associates montage with "making the look a key piece in the game":

> Cutting on a look is almost the definition of montage, its supreme ambition as well as its submission to *mise-en-scène*. It is, in effect, to bring out the soul under the spirit, the passion behind the intrigue, to make the heart prevail over the intelligence by destroying the notion of space in favor of that of time.[19]

In a passage suggesting his later film work, Godard says that one invents and improvises in front of the moviola just as much as on the set. And: Cutting a camera movement in four may prove more effective than keeping it as shot. An exchange of glances can only be expressed with sufficient force, when necessary, by editing. Godard concludes: to say that a director should supervise the editing of his film comes to the same thing as saying that the editor should move to the set and himself direct. The operations are so interwoven and equal in importance that no sort of subordination is possible between them.

Hitchcock's films exist in a mixed stylistic realm, they contain both long takes and montage sequences, both long shots and close-ups. Godard's recurring point about Hitchcock is that he always makes style dependent upon subject matter: different scenes call for different camera treatments. Hitchcock is not really "classical construction," but Godard nevertheless uses him against Bazin because the responsiveness of his camera to subject matter at any particular moment effectively denies the superiority of any one camera treatment for all subjects. Thus Godard's anti-Bazin polemic continues, but his arguments are now somewhat different and therefore his theoretical position also. Classical construction gives way to form-content relativism. In the early *Strangers on a Train* piece (#8), he says: "I find in [Hitchcock and Griffith] the same admirable ease in the use of figures of speech or technical processes; in other words they make the best use of the means available to their art form."[20] "The point is simply that all the freshness and invention of American films springs from the fact that they make the subject the motive for the *mise-en-scène*."[21]

The piece on *The Man Who Knew Too Much*

(#13) does not return to this issue, but that on *The Wrong Man* (#19) is Godard's most thorough critical treatment of the theme.

> Throughout his entire career, Hitchcock has never used an unnecessary shot. Even the most anodyne of them invariably serve the plot, which they enrich, rather as the "touch" beloved of the Impressionists enriched their paintings. They acquire their particular meaning only when seen in the context of the whole.[22]
>
> Even more than a moral lesson, *The Wrong Man* is a lesson in *mise-en-scène* every foot of the way. In the example I have just cited, Hitchcock was able to assemble the equivalent of several close-ups in a single shot, giving them a force they would not have had individually. Above all—and this is the important thing—he did it deliberately and at precisely the right moment. When necessary, he will also do the reverse, using a series of rapid close-ups as the equivalent of a master shot.[23]
>
> Hitch never repeats a device without being perfectly aware of cause and effect. Today he uses his great discoveries as aesthetic conclusion rather than postulate. Thus, the treatment of a scene in a single shot has never been better justified* than during the second imprisonment when Manny, seen from the back, enters his cell . . . [24]
>
> Hitchcock shows us that a technical discovery is pointless unless it is accompanied by a formal conquest in whose crucible it can shape the mold which is called "style." To the question 'What is art?', Malraux has already given a precise reply: 'that by which forms become style.'[25]

Godard occasionally makes this point again, as in the piece on Vadim following that on *The Wrong Man:* "Once the characters' motivations are clearly established, *mise-en-scène* becomes a simple matter of logic. Vadim will become a great director because his scenes are never occasioned by a purely abstract or theoretical idea for a shot; rather it is the *idea of a scene,* in other words a dramatic idea, which occasions the *idea of a shot.*"[26] By and large, however, *The Wrong Man* piece seems to have exhausted this point or line of argument for Godard. There he made the case conclusively, or at least at length.

The Wrong Man and *Sait-on jamais?* (Vadim)

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*Long takes, like other shots, must be justified contextually, *not* in the apriori Bazin manner.

pieces take Godard through the first year of his return to criticism. They seem to have exhausted not only the subject-treatment point, but Godard's anti-Bazin impulse also. This central theme of the early criticism drops from Godard's criticism following *Sait-on jamais?* (#20). Oddly, Godard's concern with this issue was not affected by his lapses from critical activity. After four years away from criticism, he picked it up again almost immediately, "Montage My Fine Care" reformulating the earlier "Classical Construction" in clearer and simpler terms. This issue occupied Godard's critical activity spanning five years, from the *Strangers on a Train* piece (#8) in March 1952 to the *Sait-on jamais?* piece in July 1957, suggesting that its resolution was logical not chronological.

In the year that follows, July 1957 to June 1958, Godard's critical work (16 pieces) does not reveal a central theme or focus. Godard pursues a number of critical interests, among them Frank Tashlin, Nicholas Ray, and Kenji Mizoguchi; but he seems to deal with each on different grounds. An exception is his praising both Tashlin and Ray for developing modern cinematic styles, a point we consider below.

It was in Godard's third, highly active year of writing criticism that he produced the bulk of his critical texts, 49 pieces between July 1958 and July 1959. Located here are a second and third group of themes or ideas which we wish to explore. The second group, unlike the first, exhibits changes and significant development. This group requires especially close attention to the texts concerned.

In "Bergmanorama" (#37), Godard argues that Ingmar Bergman is the most original filmmaker of the European cinema. He proposes a comparison between Bergman and Visconti.

> But when talent comes so close to genius that the result is *Summer Interlude* or *White Nights,* is there any point in endlessly arguing as to which is ultimately greater than the other, the complete *auteur* or the pure *metteur en scène?* Maybe there is, because to do so is to analyze two conceptions of cinema, one of which may be more valid than the other.
>
> Broadly speaking, there are two kinds of filmmakers. Those who walk along the streets with their

heads down, and those who walk with their heads up. In order to see what is going on around them, the former are obliged to raise their heads suddenly and often, turning to the left and then the right, embracing the field of vision in a series of glances. They *see.* The latter see nothing, they *look,* fixing their attention on the precise point which interests them. When the former are shooting a film, their framing is roomy and fluid (Rossellini), whereas with the latter is it narrowed down to the last millimetre (Hitchcock). With the former (Welles), one finds a script construction which may be loose but is remarkably open to the temptations of chance; with the latter (Lang), camera movements not only of incredible precision in the set but possessing their own abstract value as movements in space. Bergman, on the whole, belongs to the first group; Visconti to the second, the cinema of rigor. Personally I prefer *Summer With Monika* to *Senso,* and the *politique des auteurs* to the *politique des metteurs en scène.*[27]

No one would deny that *The Seventh Seal* is less skilfully directed than *White Nights,* its compositions less precise, its angles less rigorous; but—and herein lies the essential difference—for a man so enormously talented as Visconti, making a very good film is ultimately a matter of very good taste. He is sure of making no mistakes, and to a certain extent it is easy. . . . [But] For an artist, to know oneself too well is to yield a little to facility.

What is difficult, on the other hand, is to advance into unknown lands, to be aware of the danger, to take risks, to be afraid.[28]

Godard shares certain of his critical terms with his contemporaries — *auteur* vs. *metteur-en-scène, politique des auteurs* vs. *politique de metteur-en-scène.* But Godard conjoins these to other oppositions: looseness vs. precision of direction, spontaneity vs. planning, etc. He seems more interested in the latter concepts than in the former, though this essay persistently overlays the two. This conjunction itself does not seem to hold up. Why can't a roomy and fluid *mise-en-scène* define a *metteur-en-scène* as well as a precise one? Why can't a genuine *auteur* have a narrowed rather than fluid visual style? The logic of Godard's conjunction would disqualify Hitchcock and Lang as *auteurs.* Their visual rigor characterizes the *metteur-en-scène.* Of course Godard does not accept the consequences of this logic, though in this article Hitchcock and Lang constitute somewhat negative exam-

ples. Godard seems to be seeking a model or paradigm of cinema or of direction. He continues the search in several other articles of this period.

Godard's preference, in "Bergmanorama," for chance and spontaneity over rigor and precision seems to mark an important change in his work as a whole. We recall his extolling in "Defense" a cinema of "artificial grandeur" in which "nothing is left to chance." This change is confirmed by the other articles of this period. To what degree does Godard break with his former position? Does his new praise of chance constitute in any way a capitulation to the Bazinian system formerly criticized?

A reversal of values is evident in *The Quiet American* piece (#39), in which Godard reconsiders his admiration for Mankiewicz. He still admires the wit and precision of the latter's scripts, but sees Mankiewicz as perhaps too perfect a writer to be a perfect director as well. What is missing from *The Quiet American* is cinema. Despite brilliant acting and sparkling dialogue, the result on the screen is slightly academic in shooting and editing.

The Pajama Game (#42) provided Godard with the opportunity to work out his ideas of spontaneity vs. planning, chance vs. precision, in relation to dance. Whereas classical dance fails to get across the screen footlights, "modern ballet is as happy there as a fish in water because it is a stylization of real everyday movements."[29] Classical dance seeks the immobility in movement, which is by definition the opposite of cinema. Rather than a goal, repose in the cinema is on the contrary the starting point for movement. This is even more true of the musical, which is in a way the idealization of cinema: a balustrade is no longer something to lean on but an obstacle to clear—everything becomes simply a pretext for the "lines which displace movement":

So hooray for Robert Fosse and Stanley Donen, who have managed to push this aesthetic almost to its furthest limits in *The Pajama Game.* The arabesques of their dance movements reveal an unfamiliar grace, that of actuality, which is completely absent from, for example, the purely mathematical choreography of Michael Kidd.[30]

The originality of this style might be defined by saying that when the actor dances, he is no longer transformed into a dancer doing his act, nor is he a dancer playing a role; he still remains in character, but suddenly feels the need to dance.

In a slightly earlier essay, on *L'Eau Vive* (#38), Godard discusses a related but quite distinct idea. His subject is the director's ability "to give to romance the lure of reality, as is right and proper in any shotgun marriage between fiction and reality."[31] "Here fiction rejoins the reality which had overtaken it . . . The art of the film-maker is, precisely, to be able to seize this artificial beauty, giving the impression that it is entirely natural."[31] The critical tendency of these pieces (from "Bergmanorama" forward) remains consistent, but there is an important conceptual shift here. In the first three articles discussed, spontaneity and chance are opposed to planning and design, imprecision to precision, joy to perfection. Here the opposing terms are reality and fiction. Spontaneity vs. planning, etc. enter in, but now in a different way. The director uses or simulates spontaneity in order to naturalize the artifact, to make the fiction *seem* natural and real. Godard's use of the concept of spontaneity in the earlier three essays *can* be read as naturalism not naturalization, that is, as a genuine contact of cinema with the real, with life, with "what is going on around," with "the temptations of chance," etc. In short, Bazinism: some notion of the ontological transfer of living things or objects onto the filmic image. In *L'Eau Vive,* spontaneity is no longer celebrated simply and directly as a thing or quality existing in the world, which is seized or copied by cinema. It is no longer the natural. Godard now situates spontaneity decisively within discourse. This utterly changes it. No longer of the real, it is an effect of discourse, a trick of rhetoric, a quality achieved by the skillful director in order to naturalize his discourse, i.e., make it more effective. It is an event, change, or effect occurring entirely within discourse—and therein and thereafter on audiences.

This transition — from a naturalism of the image, from reality itself *caught* by cinema to a specifiable operation within discourse, leading to a certain effect—is of great theoretical im-

portance. The notes that follow trace this idea in its new form, i.e., this new concept, through several subsequent Godard texts.

A long piece on a festival of short films, "Take Your Own Tours" (#56—February 1959) contains this note:

> *Blue Jeans* belongs to a category of short film which is false in principle, being half-way between documentary and narrative fiction. Art is difficult here, for as we have seen, one must on the one hand introduce a plot to lend it the suspense natural to the full-length film, while on the other one has not enough time to develop this plot with the necessary care. Therefore, since one *must* tell a story, one must take only the beginning and the end—in other words, schematize—which involves the aesthetic risk of making something seem theoretic when one is trying to make it seem living. So one must make sure that the dramatic structure constitutes a simple emotion, simple enough to allow one time to analyze it in depth, and also strong enough to justify the enterprise.[32]
>
> Rozier has staked everything on lucidity within improvisation . . . Here the truth of the document makes common cause with the grace of the narration.[33]

A piece on *Les Rendez-vous du Diable* (#64—March 1959) makes clear what the passages quoted suggest, that Godard was reconsidering certain of Bazin's ideas during this period.

> What is remarkable, therefore, is this overweening desire to record, this fierce purpose which Tazieff shares with a Cartier-Bresson or the Sucksdorff of *The Great Adventure,* this deep inner need which forces them to try, against all odds, to authenticate fiction through the reality of the photographic image. Let us now replace the word fiction by fantasy. One then comes back to one of André Bazin's key thoughts in the first chapter of *Qu'est-ce que le cinéma?,* thoughts concerning the "Ontology of the photographic image," and of which one is constantly reminded in analysing any shot from *Les Rendez-vous du Diable.* Haroun Tazieff does not know, but proves that Bazin did know, that "the camera alone possesses a sesame for this universe where supreme beauty is identified at one and the same time with nature and with chance."[34]

In a piece on *La Ligne de Mire* (#66—March 1959), Godard says:

> Pollet allows his actors complete freedom. Taking

advantage of a carefully worked out scenario, he allows them in effect to improvise their scenes almost entirely. Again, *why?* Quite simply, once again, to upset Diderot's theory [that the actor is more effective when distanced from his role] and turn the paradox of the actor into the more cinematographic, and therefore more moving, one of the character. For faced by this world large or small vibrating before him, Pollet is content to be, at the viewfinder, on the lookout for poetry.[35]

There is a major statement on these questions in April 1959, "Africa Speaks of the End and the Means" (#72), a piece on *Moi, un Noir* by Jean Rouch. Godard first mentions Rouch in two notes written in December 1958 (#51, #53). In one he calls Rouch's *Treichville* the greatest French film since the Liberation, in the other he says of *Moi, un Noir:* "Everything, in effect is completely new . . . script, shooting and sound recording."[36] "*Moi, un Noir* is a paving stone in the marsh of French cinema, as *Rome, Open City* in its day was in world cinema."[37]

Godard published a short piece on *Moi, un Noir* in *Arts* in March 1959 (#68), then the longer one in *Cahiers* in April 1959 (#72).

> Rouch's originality lies in having made characters out of his actors—who are actors in the simplest sense of the term, moreover, being filmed *in action,* while Rouch contents himself with filming this action after having, as far as possible, organized it logically in the manner of Rossellini.[38]
>
> For, after all, there are no half-measures. Either it is reality or it is fiction. Either one stages something or one does reportage. Either one opts completely for art or for chance. For construction or for actuality. Why is this so? Because in choosing one, you automatically come round to the other.
>
> To be more precise. You make *Alexander Nevsky* or *India '58.* You have an aesthetic obligation to film one, a moral obligation to film the other. But you have no right to film, say, *Nanook of the North,* as though you were filming *Sunrise.* [Malraux's mistake in *L'Espoir* lay in not committing himself fully to one direction or the other.] In other words, his *mise en scène* yields a priori to actuality, and his actuality yields to *mise en scène.* I repeat, a priori. For it is here that one feels a certain awkwardness, as one never does with Flaherty, but which one finds in *Lost Continent.*[39]
>
> Once again let us dot a few i's. All great fiction

films tend towards documentary, just as all great documentaries tend toward fiction. *Ivan the Terrible* tends toward *Que Viva Mexico!,* and vice versa; *Mr. Arkadin* towards *It's All True,* and conversely. One must choose between ethic and aesthetic. That is understood. But it is no less understood that each word implies a part of the other. And he who opts wholeheartedly for one, necessarily finds the other at the end of his journey.[40]

> *(Moi, un Noir)* contains the answer, the answer to the great question: can art be consonant with chance? Yes, Rouch shows, more and more clearly (or getting better and better) . . . All is now clear. To trust to chance is to *hear voices.* Like Jeanne d'Arc of old, our friend Jean set out with a camera to save, if not France, French cinema at least. A door opens on a new cinema, says the poster for *Moi, un Noir.* How right it is. . . . Of course, *Moi, un Noir* is still far from rivalling *India '58.* There is a jokey side to Rouch which sometimes undermines his purpose. Not that the inhabitants of Treichville haven't the right to poke fun at everything, but there is a certain facility about his acceptance of it. A joker can get to the bottom of things as well as another, but this should not prevent him from self-discipline.[41]

In April 1959 and June 1959, Godard published an interview (#75) and a brief note (#83) on Rossellini's *India 58.*

> *India* runs counter to all normal cinema: the image merely complements the idea which provokes it. *India* is a film of absolute logic, more Socratic than Socrates. Each image is beautiful, not because it is beautiful in itself, like a shot from *Que Viva Mexico!,* but because it has the splendor of the true, and Rossellini starts from truth. He has already gone on from the point which others may perhaps reach in twenty years time. India embraces the cinema of the whole world, as the theories of Riemann and Planck embraced geometry and classical physics. In a future issue, I shall show why *India* is the creation of the world.[42]

Godard's theorizing about the relations between fiction and documentary continue into his film-making period. The December 1962 *Cahiers* interview (#93) contains a good deal of discussion on this point, now from the perspective of Godard's first four feature films. The October 1965 (#171) interview has some also, though less. Even in looking back upon his own experience, Godard is unable to define or re-

solve the question with any more precision than he had brought to bear as critic. That he continued to talk about this problem in the same terms itself suggests that he did not resolve it.

The passages quoted make clear that the conceptual displacement analyzed above is not as firm and clear-cut as suggested. Godard's earlier vacillations resolved themselves into a concept of cinema as permanently, inherently divided between two poles, fiction and reality. That is, a vacillation became a paradox, which is something quite different. Moving between two alternative solutions to a problem is not at all the same thing as recognizing a bipolarity as itself the solution. The latter involves a positive acquisition of knowledge, the former involves a lack of knowledge. A paradox may well be a superior form of knowledge to what preceded it. Still, it is perhaps inherently unsatisfactory.

Once he had attained this paradox, Godard did not retreat from it into a fallacious simplicity of explanation. Rather, he explored film theory and various particular films through the paradox itself, by inflecting its two terms and their relations within the narrow maneuver space permitted by the model. Thus, the citation of Bazin and a few remarks suggesting a naturalism do not deny or dissolve the fiction or discursive pole of the model. Rather they assume it and venture forth in attempted explanation only by virtue of its anchoring force. (The reverse may be true as well.)

Here too there is an important parallel with Metz. For the latter, films are made up of non-articulated or analogue materials (footage), which are then articulated into a discourse (digitalized) by operation of laws or rules whose study is Metz's principal work. Thus, in Metz too (as perhaps in most theories of film to date), film is described by a biopolar model. The difference between Godard and Metz is that Godard arrived at his model at the end of his explorations, whereas Metz takes it as a point of departure and works from there. Also, Godard put his model in the form of a paradox, i.e., in a form in which it was unsolvable. Metz's analysis is not paradoxical.

There is a third complex of ideas in *Godard*

on *Godard* which is worthy of examination. This is Godard's nascent concept of the metafilm, the film made out of knowledge of film history and/ or the film about film. It is less conspicuous than the other complexes of ideas discussed: it is only touched upon in a few essays. It is also far less developed theoretically than the other two, indeed little more than broached in one essay and not returned to again.

In February 1959, Godard published an essay on *Man of the West* by Anthony Mann (#57). He calls the film a superWestern, in the sense that *Shane* and *High Noon* are; but does not find this to be the defect that it is in those films. After *The Tin Star,* Mann's art seemed to be evolving toward "a purely theoretic schematism of *mise-en-scène,* directly opposed to that of *The Naked Spur, The Far Country, The Last Frontier,* or even *The Man From Laramie,*" Mann's classical Westerns employing classical *mise-en-scène.*

> If one looks again at *The Man From Laramie, The Tin Star* and *Man of the West* in sequence, it may perhaps be that this extreme simplification is an endeavor, and the systematically more and more linear dramatic construction is a search: in which case the endeavor and the search would in themselves be, as *Man of the West* now reveals, a step forward . . .
>
> But a step forward in what direction? Towards a Western style which will remind some of Conrad, others of Simenon, but reminds me of nothing whatsoever, for I have seen nothing so completely new since—why not?—Griffith. Just as the director of *Birth of a Nation* gave one the impression that he was inventing the cinema with every shot, each shot of *Man of the West* gives one the impression that Anthony Mann is reinventing the Western . . . It is, moreover, more than an impression. *He does reinvent.* I repeat, reinvent; in other words, he both shows and demonstrates, innovates and copies, criticizes and creates. *Man of the West,* in short, is both course and discourse, or both beautiful landscapes and the explanation of this beauty, both the mystery of firearms and the secret of this mystery, both art and theory of art . . . of the Western, the most cinematographic genre in the cinema, if I may so put it. The result is that *Man of the West* is quite simply an admirable lesson in cinema—in modern cinema.[43]

The reference to Griffith is perhaps a passkey to exploring Godard's thinking here. Griffith's

name comes up a few times in this period of Godard's writings, and in each case it is used to suggest a return to origins and a re-beginning, or, in other words, a meta-reflection on film. Godard wrote in his piece on the short film:

Today a short film must be intelligent in that it can no longer afford to be naive like, for instance, Griffith's *The New York Hat* or Chaplin's *The Fireman*. By this I mean that in Sennett's day, cinematographic invention was based on spontaneity; this was, so to speak, the starting-point of all aesthetic effort, whereas today it is the end. Growing more elaborate as the footage increased, it has become less and less natural and more and more deliberate. So much so that, looking at it from an historical point of view, I conclude this: to make a short film today is in a way to return to the cinema's beginnings . . . For this instinctive spontaneity can now be replaced only by its opposite, purposeful intelligence. And it is because this inner contradiction is also its sole aesthetic trump that the short film has for long and by definition been a false genre. To make short films has become synonymous with attempting the impossible.

Let us suppose that you are commissioned to make a film about railways. Now, as we have just seen, at the time of *L'Arrivée en gare de la Ciotat* a train was a subject for a film: the proof, I would almost add, is that Lumière made the film. But today a train, as such, is no longer an original film subject, but simply a theme which can be exploited. So you will be faced by the extraordinarily difficult task of having to shoot, not a subject, but the reverse or shadow of this subject; and of attempting to create cinema while knowing beforehand that you are venturing into anti-cinema.[44]

He says in "A Time to Love and a Time to Die" (#73—April 1959), "I think one should mention Griffith in all articles about the cinema: everyone agrees, but everyone forgets none the less. Griffith, therefore, and André Bazin too, for the same reasons; and now that is done, I can get back to my . . . "[45]

In the December 1962 *Cahiers* interview (#93), Godard says: "A young author writing today knows that Molière and Shakespeare exist. We were the first directors to know that Griffith exists." If Griffith equals the mythic origins of cinema, the founding of narrative film conventions and the narrative film tradition, then making films with knowledge of Griffith leads to a new kind of film, a film that is a reflection on itself, on what narrative film is, as well as itself a narrative. "I have seen nothing so completely new since Griffith."

Godard suggests other meta-filmic possibilities also. In both his pieces on *Moi, un Noir,* Godard mentions a crane shot taken by Rouch which is formally identical to an Anthony Mann crane shot, except that it is hand-held by Rouch. The shots are parallel because their relationship to the subject is identical, hence their meaning and emotional effect is the same. *Scale* here means nothing. In a sense, to know this, and to make films in this knowledge—to remake the great films or subjects with hand-held camera—is to make a meta-film. The fact that a film-maker can paraphrase an action or camera movement by shooting it hand-held and thereby obtaining the same formal relations perhaps makes it impossible to make naive or traditional films again, as Godard suggests in the piece on short films. Does this make meta-filming possible? Inevitable?

Godard's few passages on what we (not he) call the meta-film are ambivalent. He is optimistic in the Mann piece—"I've seen nothing so new since Griffith"—and jubilant in welcoming Rouch as bringer of a new cinema, but the paragraph on the impossibility of the short film is pessimistic. He speaks of "the extraordinarily difficult task of having to shoot, not a subject, but the reverse or shadow of this subject" and of "venturing into anti-cinema." He suggests a certain defeatism in attempting to make films now. Cinema has suddenly become problematic to itself. (Cf. Barthes, *Writing Degree Zero.*)

In eight years, Godard's texts go from a celebration of classical construction, in which nothing is left to chance, through the celebration of chance filming in "Bergmanorama" to the necessity of documentary and fiction in every film and from there to modernism. In eight years, Godard goes from naive confidence in a classical cinema to discovery of a new cinema which alters the balance and relations between fiction and documentary to the problematics of filming anything at all, wherein the impulse to create is displaced into negativity or anticinema. It is tempting to make out of these facts an itinerary,

indeed a teleology, such that Godard progresses from one stage to the next, each absorbing the one before, ultimately arriving at the last, whereupon he is fully prepared to make *Breathless,* acquiring his theoretical baggage just in time to make his rendezvous with history.

Teleologies are inadmissible in principle. Besides, it appears that the three groups of theoretical work we have isolated did not absorb each other. Traces of all three may be located in Godard's later statements and perhaps in his films, at least until May 1968.

These notes are not designed to answer questions but to raise them, and hopefully to put this book on the agenda for serious consideration. Our dividing Godard's writings into three groups according to theme is no more than a working construct. Of couse it is possible to divide the book up in any number of other ways.

NOTES

1. *Godard on Godard* (1972; New York, Viking), Critical writings by Jean-Luc Godard, edited by Jean Narboni and Tom Milne with an introduction by Richard Roud; translated by Milne from *Jean-Luc Godard par Jean-Luc Godard,* edited by Jean Narboni (1968; Paris, Pierre Belfond).
2. *Ibid.,* p. 26.
3. *Ibid.,* p. 30.
4. *What Is Cinema?* Vol. II, by André Bazin, translated by Hugh Gray (1971; Berkeley, California), p. 40.
5. *Godard,* p. 26–27.
6. In *The New Wave,* edited by Peter Graham (1968; New York, Doubleday), p. 50.
7. *Godard,* p. 27.
8. *Ibid.*
9. *Ibid.,* p. 28.
10. *Ibid.,* p. 28–29.
11. *Ibid.,* p. 29.
12. *Ibid.,* p. 29–30.
13. *Ibid.,* p. 28.
14. *Ibid.,* p. 30.
15. *Ibid.,* pp. 27–28.
16. *Ibid.,* p. 3U.
17. *Ibid.,* pp. 30–31.
18. *Ibid.,* p. 39.
19. *Ibid.*
20. *Ibid.,* p. 25.
21. *Ibid.*
22. *Ibid.,* pp. 48–49.
23. *Ibid.,* p. 50.
24. *Ibid.,* p. 52.
25. *Ibid.,* p. 54.
26. *Ibid.,* p. 57.
27. *Ibid.,* p. 79.
28. *Ibid.,* p. 80.
29. *Ibid.,* p. 87.
30. *Ibid.*
31. *Ibid.,* p. 81.
32. *Ibid.,* p .114.
33. *Ibid.*
34. *Ibid.,* p. 126.
35. *Ibid.,* p. 128.
36. *Ibid.,* p. 104.
37. *Ibid.*
38. *Ibid.,* p. 131.
39. *Ibid.,* p. 132.
40. *Ibid.,* pp. 132–133.
41. *Ibid.,* p. 133.
42. *Ibid.,* p. 150.
43. *Ibid.,* pp. 116–117.
44. *Ibid.,* p. 112.
45. *Ibid.,* p. 135.

Reviews

THE MOTHER AND THE WHORE

Director: Jean Eustache. Producer: Pierre Cottrell. Script: Eustache. Photography: Pierre Lhomme. Editing: Eustache and Denise de Casabianca. New Yorker Films.

Despite the bad reviews it received when first shown in New York, *The Mother and the Whore* seems to me the finest European film to reach us since *The Salamander.* But its achievements are deceptive. The film is about love, at least on the surface; and you can take it as another French essay on the ironies and imperfections thereof. But there is something more than usually unnerving and desolating about Eustache's treatment of these matters. He is willing to pick up far more on the dark side of love than a director like De Broca. His people hurt each other until they cry, and then a little more; and through this, somehow, they know each other and survive. In Eustache's contemporary Paris the old social certainties have vanished. Charming youths steal wheelchairs from cripples. Infidelity is no longer a subcategory of bourgeois marriage, capable of absorption into some larger stable order at the film's end; it is merely a brutal psychological event, and the jealousy and anguish that follow are unassuagable. Eustache is willing to chronicle pain without trying to resolve it through some kind of dramatic machinery; he is a sort of documentarist of emotion.

Stylistically, *The Mother and the Whore* is mercilessly simplified. Fade in, the characters